

VZCZCXRO2055

PP RUEHBC RUEHDE RUEHIHL RUEHKUK

DE RUEHGB #1934 1630122

ZNY CCCCC ZZH

P 120122Z JUN 07

FM AMEMBASSY BAGHDAD

TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1646

INFO RUCNRAQ/IRAQ COLLECTIVE

C O N F I D E N T I A L BAGHDAD 001934

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 06/11/2017

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [IZ](#)

SUBJECT: COR SPEAKER MASHADANI ON HIS WAY OUT?

Classified by PolCouns Scobey for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) Summary: An altercation between CoR Speaker Mashadani's security detail and another MP early on June 10 put focus on the long-standing desire of many CoR members to remove him as Speaker. The CoR voted June 11 to consider the Speaker to be on leave until such time as a replacement from the Sunni Tawafuq bloc is named. The move arose out of cumulative frustration with Mashadani's rough style and creates an opportunity (and challenge) for Tawafuq to put forth a credible replacement at a time when the CoR is in drastic need of leadership. Mashadani has been under fire before, and rebounded, yet this latest move has even his office staff telling us his resignation is sure. End summary.

¶2. (C) Frustration with Speaker Mashadani's brusque manner, combative debating style, emotional outbursts, poor session management, and even periodic physical violence (slapping a member earlier this year, for example), have had many CoR members looking for an opportunity to replace him. Reports of a petition requesting his resignation have circulated in recent months. A June 10 incident in which the Speaker's robust security team brushed against an MP in a rough manner -- leading to arguments between the MP and Mashadani and further rough handling by his bodyguards -- became the "straw that broke the camel's back" (a proverb many MP's used to describe the event). The reaction was immediate. The June 10 session was dedicated to this one topic; a follow-up session June 11 issued a resolution calling for an alternative candidate for Speaker. (Both sessions were closed to the public and Mashadani did not attend either one.)

¶3. (SBU) The June 11 resolution, reportedly approved by a majority of CoR members in closed session, reads approximately as follows: Building upon Tawafuq's assurance that Mahmoud Mashadani would resign as Speaker, the CoR accepts this assurance and considers Mashadani on leave until Tawafuq presents another candidate to this position. First Deputy Speaker Sheikh Khalid al-Attiya will assume the role and authorities of Speaker during the period in which Mr. Mashadani is on leave.

¶4. (C) Many members suggest that Tawafuq should present a candidate for Speaker within one week (the next CoR session is scheduled for June 19). Maintaining the broader political balance leads members from all political stripes to conclude that the Sunni Tawafuq bloc will likely fill the seat, and many go further to suggest that intra-Tawafuq dynamics call for a nominee from Mashadani's subgroup, the National Dialogue Council led by Khalaf Allyan. With only seven members, including one who remains hospitalized following the April 12 CoR bombing, the bench is not very deep in that group -- which is partially how Mashadani won as compromise candidate for Speaker in the first place -- and this new vacancy may be an opportunity for Tawafuq to put forth a stronger leader from the Iraqi Islamic Party (IIP) of VP Tareq al-Hashimi or an independent Sunni. The reaction of Shia and Kurdish blocs to the eventual nominee also bears watching; while indications are that most want Mashadani

gone, the reception of his eventual successor is a separate matter.

¶5. (C) The pundits have ruled out Mashadani before, only to be surprised by his rebound. Until he formally resigns, or the CoR takes action to formally replace him, his hat is still nominally in the ring -- although the current fiasco has seriously undercut his credibility and even his own staff tells us his resignation is sure. That said, the June 11 vote to consider him "on leave" is not likely a legally binding decision until the CoR names a new leader by an absolute majority (138 votes).

CROCKER